

TROPICAL PHOTOGRAPHY.

THE use of the camera in countries close under the equator involves certain conditions that are peculiar, and a recent extensive journey in **Venezuela** as a journalist, gave me so many opportunities of experiment, that a few words upon the subject may be of interest.

From our first day in the beautiful and picturesque island of Curaçoa, to the parting from the lofty mountains at La Guayra, every mile of travel was full of interest to an artist, and full of occupation for his camera. In Curaçoa, which is almost an accurate reproduction of New Amsterdam as old time illustrations recall it to us, there is a wealth of material and a difficulty of performance sufficient to satisfy the most critical and exacting amateur. Some of the streets are not four feet wide, and the mass of balconies, projecting windows, overhanging roofs and quaint doors, is so intensely lighted by a vertical sun, that details in shadows are almost out of the question. With a Darlot R. R. lens, No. 2 stop, and thirty seconds' exposure of a Stanley plate, there was but faint definition of a group of negroes on the pavement, while roofs and dormers were a blaze of white. The grand difficulty was to get short enough exposure. My Eclipse shutter required additional tension, and some of my best negatives were made instantaneous with half-sized stops.

Although Soubllette has an excellent gallery, which he places at the disposition of visitors with charming hospitality—and street photography is no new thing—there is no end to the curiosity excited by a camera, and I soon had a long trail, as a Hieland man would say, whenever I showed up in the streets. A beautiful mixture of water and hills gives every chance for artistic composition, and the Hollandish houses of many stories and mediæval decorations make splendid foregrounds.

But it is the magnificent light that makes things work so well. From 8 A. M. to 5:30 P. M., the shutter is constantly needed, and time exposures can be made for an hour longer.

There is no manner of need to carry into any of these places anything beyond camera and plates. I carried down a full outfit of developing chemicals, etc., which came all the way home again, while I used the many opportunities that were freely tendered me in every city except Valencia, in **Venezuela**, where there are 30,000 people and not a single photographer. Nor is there a gallery in La Guayra, with a population of 8,000; nor in Puerto Cabello, with 7,000 souls. It appears a little strange that this is the case, and if any young man with moderate capital, part of which *must* be a knowledge of Spanish, would go down there and commence business, I feel certain that he would succeed.

Salas and Martinas of Caracas, lead the profession in **Venezuela**, and have a finely equipped establishment, doing most excellent work.

In all these far lands it will be found much better to develop plates each night, as an opportunity is thus given to rectify mistakes, which can only be done at that time. My last exposures were made with Thomas' plates (English), and, there being no time to work before the steamer sailed, I brought them home dark. Result almost nil, from ignorance of plates and lack of practice with ammonia solutions. It will be found far better to carry what seems an extravagant number of plates at first than to risk failure by changing to unknown goods.

Amateur photography is progressing slowly. Dr. E. A. Bacheller, of Guanapa, La Guayra, has a comfortable dark room and does good work, and Mr. Augustin Helmund, of Caracas, is also an enthusiast in the art.

And a finer field cannot be imagined. The people are courteous and hospitable, offering every possible aid, even to begging to pose; street scenes are curious and pretty, and the light over all is of such vivid whiteness that every nerve of an operator is put on stretch to work quickly enough. In the country, with its wealth of mountain pictures

of dark, deep gorges and of brilliant water effects, there is less comfort than in town, on account of poor hotel accomodations ; but in so delicious a climate it is not hard to rough it a little, and one can always get good coffee and bread.

One of my failures which I regretted and still regret, was a flock or cloud of locusts that came up from a railway cutting so thick as to obscure the sun. They moved about so slowly that there was ample time to get ready ; but the plate only gave the smallest possible shadow to show where they had been.

But failures were rare, successes the rule, and my collection this season is by far the best of a number, taken in many parts of the world. If there is a country where a wandering artist can find better material and enjoy himself more, it is to me a terra incognita.

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